



# & Workers' Liberty Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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# NO HARD BREXIT!



Loud voices among the Tories are pushing for a "hard Brexit". They want to slam the door on migrants from Europe and make things difficult for migrant workers already here.

The Tories are divided. Most of big business want to stay in the EU's "single market", so that they do not face tariffs or complicated juggling with forms and regulation when trading with the EU. They want to keep "passporting" rights for UK-based banks to trade across the EU.

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**Defend freedom of movement.  
Oppose new barriers.  
Solidarity across borders.**

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blamed  
for  
rape**



Elizabeth Butterworth dissects the arguments used in the retrial of Ched Evans.

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**The  
prescription  
opiates of the  
people**



Les Hearn examines the science behind the crisis of prescription opioids.

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**Not miserable  
but inspiring**



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**Join Labour!**  
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## NUS boycott National Student Survey, but is it “risky”?

By Omar Raii, National Union of Students National Executive personal capacity

Earlier in October NUS announced long-awaited plans for a boycott of the National Student Survey, a government-sponsored questionnaire taken by final-year undergraduates where they are asked to rate their university on various criteria.

The boycott is a tactic to fight the government's current Higher Education reforms. These reforms have been criticised by groups such as the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts for not only proposing continually higher tuition fees, but also plans to relax rules on private providers, in an attempt to force competition in higher education.

This will inevitably lead to further marketisation of an already increasingly privatised sector, with bad results for workers and students.

However, the boycott plans have been threatened by a bureaucratic manoeuvre by thirty-eight student unions who have demanded the NUS ballots all student unions and asks them whether it should carry out an equality impact and risk assessment of the proposed boycott!

The NUS has been forced to carry out this national ballot.

This attempt to overturn the vote of NUS conference is characteristic of timid student union leaderships across the country, people who believe that tame lobbying of the Tory government, rather than forcing its hand, will be the way to stop it in its tracks, contrary to all previous evidence.

Given the seriousness of the proposed reforms, it is vitally necessary that serious action is taken. The boycott of the NSS can be an incredibly effective tactic, given the reliance and support that the government and university managements put on it.

**If all goes well, the NSS will be launched in January and boycotted thenceforth. NCAFC activists are planning to publicise the boycott widely and now collecting pledges from final year undergraduates.**

# UK should stop supporting Saudi war on Yemen

By Dan Katz

Following a Saudi attack on mourners attending a funeral in Yemen's capital, Sanaa, the US has reviewed its policy of support for the Saudi war.

140 died in the bombing raid on Saturday 8 October, with over 500 injured. The attack was a so-called “double tap”, with a second strike timed to kill rescuers moving to the scene to help the wounded.

The “double tap” is the type of raid that the US and UK have called a “war crime” when carried out by Russia in Aleppo.

The UN estimates that over 7,000 people have now been killed in the conflict — two thirds in Saudi airstrikes. Saudi airpower has also destroyed schools, hospitals and factories.

The Saudi-led war began in March 2015 when their preferred President, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, fled the country. Hadi had been overthrown by Houthi forces from the north of the country allied to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

None of the contending parties in this war are worth supporting: they are all corrupt and reactionary.



140 died in Sanna on 8 October

The stupid, squalid, bullying Saudi-led military campaign and blockade has left a very poor country broken and over fourteen million “food insecure”, according to the World Food Programme. The Saudis are much more bothered about the possibility of growing Iranian influence in the area — through the Shia Houthi militia — than they are about the human cost of pulverising Yemen.

Malnutrition is now very wide-

spread, with at least 370,000 children “acutely malnourished”. 600 health centres have closed due to lack of fuel, staff or from security concerns.

One and a half million are internally displaced.

Now the US has acted and pulled the UK into line behind a new diplomatic turn.

The governments of the US, UK, Saudi Arabia and UAE issued a joint statement on 16 October call-

ing for a ceasefire. Without any intended irony the US's John Kerry said, “We cannot emphasise enough today the urgency of ending the violence in Yemen.”

If today “ending the violence” is “urgently necessary,” what about last week, or last month? What has changed?

Claims of Saudi war crimes are not new. All that is new is the clear realisation that the Saudi strategy is not working; Iranian influence has grown in the area as the war has ground on; the internal crisis in Yemen is making the area less safe and more unstable than before.

How can the US and UK justify what they have been doing, backing the Saudi war since 2015? They can't. Even on its own terms Western policy has been stupid and shameful.

The Tories have prioritised arms sales to the Saudis and the so-called special relationship with the US over the needs of the Yemeni people.

**The UK should: end political support for the Saudi state; end arms sales to Saudi Arabia; support the lifting of the blockade; provide humanitarian aid to Yemen.**

## Conservatives derail Colombian peace process

By Harriet Tomlinson

In August, Colombian President Manuel Santos and Timochenko, leader of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), signed a peace accord.

The agreement that had taken four years to negotiate would begin the voluntary disarmament of FARC guerillas by UN forces. On 2 October, voters in the referendum rejected the accord by a margin of 0.4% on a 30% turnout. The result was a shock to peace accord supporters.

Santos and the FARC leaders have promised to honour the ceasefire to the end of the year, and to return to negotiations. The FARC twitter feed names companies who funded the “no” campaign as war profiteers and accuses the right of forcing the closure of FARC's English-language website to silence them during the referendum campaign.

The leader of the “no” campaign is Santos' predecessor Álvaro Uribe, the neo-liberal president who attempted to change the Colombian constitution to enable him to stand for a third term. His administration was responsible for strengthening the military to tackle both AUC drug-cartel paramilitary groups and peasant militias that critically weakened FARC forces, and is partially responsible for bringing the guerillas to the negotiation table.

Uribe also demobilised many of the AUC paramilitaries; armed groups funded by drug cartels and

agriculturalists defending themselves from FARC attacks and kidnappings.

The peasant militias were pushing back against attempts to encroach on their territory, the jungle and mountainous areas ideal for cultivating opium poppies and coca. However although key figures of the AUC were disarmed and jailed, many militants signed up to government militias and killed indiscriminately, dressing the bodies up as FARC guerillas.

The false guerilla executions, known as “false positives”, were used to bulk up government statistics; many trade union leaders were extra-judicially executed in this way. The Justice for Colombia Campaign British NGO, funded by the British labour movement, claims that Colombia is the most dangerous state in the world for trade unionists, with 2,500 recorded deaths in the last 20 years.

### EXECUTIONS

**FARC have responded in kind by executing civilians suspected of collaboration with paramilitaries.**

They have also executed indigenous leaders hostile to guerilla presence on their land. To fund themselves, FARC have relied on voluntary or forced taxation of the peasants in outlying regions alongside ransom money from kidnappings. Human rights campaigners also accuse FARC of recruiting child soldiers and sexual abuse.

Despite the violence and oppression, it is those regions where the conflict is at its worst that voted strongly to accept the peace accord.

Those most affected by violence seem most anxious to end it. In the regions where FARC has its support-base, guerilla groups stand in for a lack of government infrastructure and voters may be less perturbed at seeing FARC take seats in parliament.

As part of the peace accord FARC would have been offered seats in legislature and senate, and permitted to become a political party. Disarmed rebels were to be given an allowance for a number of years to assist with reintegration into civilian life, as well as security to protect them against recriminations. FARC leaders responsible for atrocities would be required to declare them in special tribunals and pay community service — but serve no prison sentences.

Then there is the huge task of building infrastructure, providing welfare and education to those 30 regions previously provided for by peasant militias. To recover from the war, it is necessary for the government to invest heavily in its poorest rural communities, and the right are fighting this hard.

The “no” campaign described the accord as “peace over justice” and its supporters want to see FARC combatants jailed, not taking seats in parliament. The peace ceremonies have placed Timochenko and Santos centre stage, and some in the “no” camp didn't want to cast a vote that could be interpreted as support for Santos.

“No” votes were cast in traditionally conservative areas such as Uribe's city stronghold Medellín; home to the largest drug

cartel families and their beneficiaries. Conservatives have also objected to the peace accord's focus on the impact of the war on women and LGBT Colombians, which evangelical Christians have called a “gender ideology”. There were 110 homophobic killings in Colombia in 2015, with attacks and threats to LGBT people coming from the public and the police.

The low turnout in the referendum could be due to a number of factors; a hurricane prevented many Colombians in outlying regions from accessing ballot boxes, but the voting deadline was not extended. Peasant militias also have a history of boycotting parliamentary elections to avoid giving legitimacy to a heavily corrupt government system. This stands to reason; the left launched an electoral challenge in 1991 through the UP (Patriotic Union) and its legislative candidates and supporters were assassinated.

The peace accord in its current form now cannot legally be carried out, but both sides have announced that the amnesty will hold until the end of 2016. The government has also announced peace talks with Colombia's second largest guerilla group, the ELN (National Liberation Army). “The March of the Flowers” mass protests have taken place in the capital Bogotá, organised by the National Indigenous Organisation (ONIC) calling for the peace accord to be enacted.

**If these protests continue to grow, perhaps the decision can be overturned or a second referendum held.**

# Evans retrial show victims still blamed for rape

By Elizabeth Butterworth

Last week, the footballer Ched Evans was cleared of rape after appealing his 2012 conviction.

This does not mean that he did not rape victim X, or has “proved his innocence”, but that the jury had “reasonable doubt” about whether he had raped X or if she had consented to sex.

Reports of the trial’s proceedings suggest that the events were as such: X was engaged in sexual activity with Clayton McDonald, another professional footballer, who was acquitted of rape in the original trial. Evans then proceeded to have sex with X without having spoken to her, while Evans’s younger brother looked on from a window.

X has testified that she cannot remember any of these events due to being too drunk. Evans’s lawyers claimed that she had “directed” events by saying things like “fuck me harder”.

The evidence in this re-trial apparently hinged on the testimony of two men who had had sex with the victim on other occasions, and attested that she had said similar things to them as what Evans had claimed in the original trial.

It is difficult to “prove” rape, in terms of being able to show a jury that the victim was not consenting and the defendant was aware that (s)he could not or did not consent, which is what this case rested upon. However, it is difficult to see why the Court of Appeal deemed that this evidence was compelling enough for a re-trial.

It is worrying that the victim’s sexual history was brought into the trial. The implication is obvious: that, because she’d had casual sex

or drunken sex on other occasions and said things that suggested she liked having sex, it was simply a case of her having done that again. Which raises the question, do women need to police themselves to the point of not being able to have casual sex or not being able to drink, in order for men not to rape us? To which the answer is, no, men should know to leave drunk women alone and that each time someone has sex, consent must be sought first.

What I’ve read about the Ched Evans case from the perspective of criminal lawyers does not suggest wide legal implications in terms of setting new precedent. This trial, and other rape trials where there is some level of “victim blaming”, do set a cultural tone, however.

## DAILY STAR

In the *Daily Star*, their columnist Helen Wood rants, “These silly bitches who need a good slap of reality should stop and think...”

“We’re all meant to get our violins out because they’ve had to change their names five times, if she’s stuck on a new name for in future, C\*\*\* would be a good one.... Hope this case has set a lesson for all the ladies out there trying to scar people for a dollar, if you drop your kecks, deal with the walk of shame, quit trying to frame.”

X has had to change her name five times and is, according to some sources, considering moving abroad due to the harassment and abuse she has suffered both on and off-line. The abuse, like Wood’s disgusting tirade (which, let’s not forget, was published by a newspaper with about 430,000 readers), centres around X being labelled a slut, a bitch, money-hungry and a liar: all



classic misogynist tropes.

The simple fact is that pretty much every woman I know has been a victim of sexual assault or rape. And has been sexually harassed countless times.

I’ve reported being assaulted to the police and had to deal with total incompetence, inertia and non-existence of resources. I went to the police after a friend was assaulted with a knife and, after hours of painful interviews, the assailant was slapped with a fifty quid fine and no criminal record.

I’ve been raped, twice, by two

different boyfriends. I’ve also walked down the street and been grabbed. When I shrank away and asked them to leave me alone, I was followed and called a bitch and a cunt. I’ve changed my mind and not gone through with sex, at which point the man I was seeing got extremely aggressive and I had to literally run away.

In fact, any time I have challenged men — even “nice men” — over their behaviour, they become aggressive and sometimes violent. They believe they are entitled to make lecherous comments, to look

up women’s skirts, to stare down our tops and to intimidate us. And despite having had relationships with both men and women, and having been dancing in many gay clubs as well as straight, I’ve only once felt that a woman was going “too far”. The hundreds of other times have all been men.

We have a huge problem of misogyny in society. I mean actual women-hating, not just sexism. What else is it when you don’t think someone has a right to ownership over their own body and what happens to it? This is perpetrated by lots of men, who seek to show their dominance, and exert power.

And it is backed up by the internal misogyny of women like Helen Wood, who try to differentiate their womanhood from that of the “silly bitches”.

Rape is on the books as a crime. And the word and idea of “rape” is sensationalised. Yet, the reality of women’s lives is that rape is pretty “normal” and common. And due to the inertia of the police, the brutality of the courts system and the cultural bias of juries, many of us don’t see the point of reporting, let alone pursuing the case and taking rapists to court.

The victim in the Ched Evans case is my hero for reporting and taking the case to court. In the end, Evans may have been cleared, but at least this has drawn attention to the very real problems we face as a society.

**Until the women are free, the people cannot be free. Until men realise that women need to be empowered at every level, we will not be successful as a movement or as a class.**

## Antisemitism — a top-down perspective

By Ira Berkovic

On 16 October a Home Affairs Select Committee on antisemitism criticised Jeremy Corbyn’s handling of recent controversies within Labour, but also found that “no reliable empirical evidence to suggest there is a higher prevalence of antisemitic attitudes within the Labour Party than in any other party”.

The Committee report, which was dominated by Tory MPs, has been criticised for focusing too heavily on allegations of antisemitism within the Labour Party, and within that, on instances of on-line abuse, to the exclusion of analysing increases in antisemitic attacks elsewhere. Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) community groups complained that they were not invited to give evidence. The witnesses called to give evidence to the committee were also exclusively male.

The Jewish Socialists Group said

that, in a year when the Tory party was clearly implicated in pandering to racism, in the London mayoral elections and the comment of many Tory MPs about immigration, the Tory-dominated Committee had no anti-racist credibility.

Corbyn is accused of creating a “safe space” for “those with vile attitudes towards Jews”. While some of Corbyn’s politics on the Middle East, including his association with the Islamist Raed Saleh, display a softness towards antisemitic variants of “anti-Zionism”, his explicit advocacy of a two-states settlement and his opposition to blanket boycotts of Israel also put him at odds with the “absolute anti-Zionism” which Workers’ Liberty has argued has antisemitic implications.

Corbyn said: “The Committee heard evidence from too narrow a pool of opinion, and its then-chair rejected both Chakrabarti’s and the Jewish Labour Movement’s requests to appear and give evidence before it. Not a single woman was

called to give oral evidence in public, and the report violates natural justice by criticising individuals without giving them a right to be heard.

“The report’s political framing and disproportionate emphasis on Labour risks undermining the positive and welcome recommendations made in it.

“Although the Committee heard evidence that 75 per cent of antisemitic incidents come from far right sources, and the report states there is no reliable evidence to suggest antisemitism is greater in Labour than other parties, much of the report focuses on the Labour Party.”

Some of the report’s recommendations, including around the use of the term “Zionism”, echo those already made by Shami Chakrabarti’s inquiry within Labour. Like Chakrabarti, the Select Committee report says that free speech on Israel/Palestine and Zionism must be maintained.

Some of the report’s recommen-

dations, such as its suggestion that Vice Chancellors’ club Universities UK produce a guide for students on how to “sensitively” campaign around Israel/Palestine issues, seem frankly bizarre. They reflect the generally bureaucratic and top-down perspective of the Committee, which looks to administrative action from institutions — whether Twitter (to deal with online abuse), the Labour Party leadership, or Universities UK — to deal with the problem of antisemitism, rather than political education.

Workers’ Liberty has argued for a militantly confrontational attitude to rising antisemitic hate crime, as part of a politics of direct-action anti-fascism, as well as a political analysis of a distinct “left antisemitism” implied by far-left common sense on Israel/Palestine and Jewish nationalism.

**We have no faith in Tory MPs to properly analyse the problem, or propose solutions.**

More on our website:

**“Labour equals Tories equals Nazis”**  
Report of SNP conference  
[bit.ly/2dkeSZs](http://bit.ly/2dkeSZs)

**The pay-day lender’s friend**  
Tory MP Justin Tomlinson was openly colluding with Wonga.  
[bit.ly/2edFew7](http://bit.ly/2edFew7)

# The illuminating comments of Walker's defenders

By Ruth Willis

**As informative in the recent controversy in Momentum — about comments the Vice-Chair Jackie Walker made at an anti-Semitism training event — as the words Jackie Walker herself said, have been the comments made by some of those who have rallied to her defence.**

Walker claimed to have simply asked a neutral and innocent question about, and sought a clarification on, the issues of Holocaust Memorial Day and on security for Jewish students in schools. But it soon became abundantly clear that Walker's defenders saw a subtext behind the comments, what was really being said. Some wanted to draw out an antisemitic logic behind the comments.

Some commentators have drawn out the meaning of Walker's comment on Holocaust Memorial Day (expanding the day to include remembering of other Holocausts), by saying, "The Zionists try to use the Holocaust as a propaganda weapon against anyone who opposes anything Israel does"; and "Holocaust incorporated at work again — this evil, Zionist mouthpiece must be challenged". Apparently, "Israeli Zionists are corrupting UK politics by lobbying UK MPs and by using accusations of 'antisemitism' as a weapon

against their opponents".

On the issue of school security, commentators have expressed "concerns about the deliberate hyping of fears of parents concerning anti-terrorism in order to build a climate of insecurity that enables Israel to then step forward as the 'protector'". Here we have a regurgitation of the trope about manipulative, lying Jews, playing the victim for gain.

The political hostility to any Zionist Jew no matter their political outlook has been palpable and clear. I have been assured "zio is short for Zionist or racist". That we were dealing with "Zionist, Nazi vermin. Scum of the earth" — a comment no one saw the need to challenge. It was just left standing there as the debate raged on. I was also told, "any Jew that supports Israel having their own state... needs to be condemned for supporting it.... I think those that have created and nurtured Zionism are part of the group that has worked for a long time to control the world".

This is how the transition from the politics of Israel/Palestine to the recasting of far right tropes work. Ideas about Jews controlling the world are given a left wing sheen of anti-capitalism. The word Jew is replaced with "Zionist", "Israel", or "Rothschild".

Anti-Zionists have also reposted the infamous quote falsely credited to Voltaire, "To find out who rules you, find out who you are

not supposed to criticise" with a graphic of a hand crushing people down. When they were told it was in fact a quote from US neo-Nazi Kevin Strom — was this quote removed? No. It was defended as being true, no matter who said it.

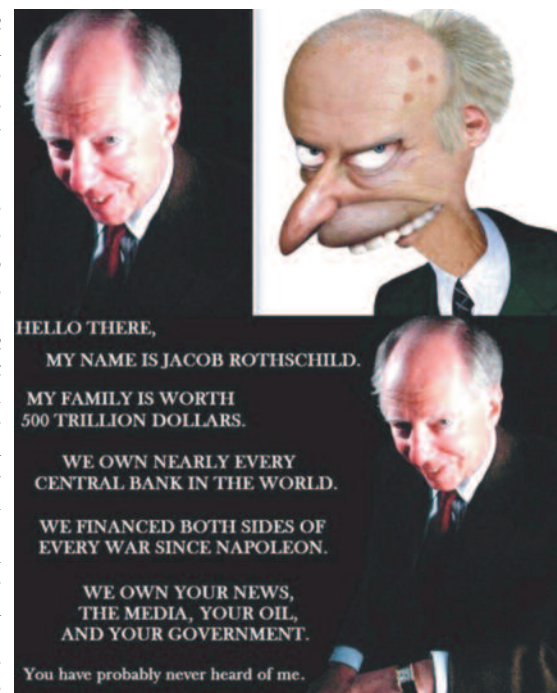
Others wishing to support Jackie Walker have re-posted articles from the website of Jeff Rense, a notorious US conspiracy theorist who disseminates antisemitic and neo-Nazi propaganda.

In a discussion on an antisemitic Rothschild meme, I was informed that "money and debt control this world and its wars. And certain families are at the core of that." Jews were described as "an alien breed like Rothschild, out to destroy mankind by creating mischief all over the world".

In Corbyn groups and Momentum groups I have found links to Richie Allen Youtube shows (in association with David Icke).

As shocking as the antisemitic nature of such original posts, has been the number of people who defended them. There were arguments about whether the Rothschilds did indeed, run the world.

**Is this kind of racist antisemitism rife on the left? No. But it is there and is often not**



**recognised, or ignored, because the language is similar to that used by those who support "anti-Zionism" as a solution to the political problems in Israel/Palestine.**

## Insurrection is not feasible?

**I know Leo Panitch pretty well and I think Martin is misrepresenting him in his report of the "parliamentary socialism" workshop at the Momentum fringe event at Labour Party conference (Solidarity 418).**

When Leo dismisses "insurrection" he means that he doesn't think that armed struggle with the bourgeois state — civil war, which Trotsky did say was the highest form of the class struggle — is feasible. The bourgeois state has tanks, fighter planes, nukes, etc. Unless revolutionary socialists win over the majority of the rank-and-file of the armed forces well in advance of taking power, we'll probably all get killed if we attempt armed insurrection.

Also, Leo isn't calling for "transforming the state bit-by-bit" any more than the AWL is. You call for "a campaign for democratic and constitutional reform that is republican, anti-racist, and internationalist" in the UK. Does this count as an attempt at "transforming the

state bit-by-bit"? It's no different than what Leo would say.

And is there anything innately anti-revolutionary about kind of statement by Leo (from *Signs of the Times*)?

"As Marx made clear from his critique of Hegel as a young man (and again in his critique of the *Gotha Programme* as an old man) the state needs to be turned from an imposition over society to a democratic instrument of society.

"Right wing populist attacks on bureaucracy and support for referenda and recall, like their call for further marketisation and privatisation, are part and parcel of their tax-revolt politics. But this does not have anything to do with democratisation of the state apparatus, and their hypocrisy is evident insofar as they are blindly supportive of the military and police apparatuses of the state.

"What should, above all, distinguish a radical socialist programme of democratisation, moreover, is the use of the state's resources

and the engagement of public employees in facilitating the collective organisation of all the people who face the state and capital as isolated and marginalized individuals.

**"The facilitation of the collective organisation of single mothers so they could stand up to the welfare agencies together and have an influence on it is an example of what I understand by the democratisation of the state as a left project."**

*Jason Schulman, on our website*

### Reply: October not a one-off

**Tigers can be restrained or evaded, but, as someone said, they cannot be skinned claw by claw. That is our view on the capitalist state.**

We have no plans to wrestle the tiger with our bare hands, or to try to hurl a revolutionary socialist minority against a stable capitalist state.

Neither had the Bolsheviks in October 1917. They prepared for the insurrection, in which, as Trotsky comments, "demonstrations, street fights, barricades, everything comprised in the usual idea of insurrection, were almost entirely absent", by sending agitators to sway military units.

"Since the preceding crowding-out of the government from its military bases [by the growing power and influence of the Bolshevik-led soviets] had made resistance almost impossible, this military seizure of the final commanding heights passed off as a general rule without conflicts".

After that, and not of their choice, the Bolsheviks had to fight a civil war against counter-revolutionaries and foreign armies.

Insurrection comes onto the agenda only when the capitalist state is destabilised and disrupted by mass struggle, and revolutionary socialists have majority support. Or at least, support which can be consolidated into a majority by bold initiative: one problem with the no-insurrection line is that it will lead the socialists to hesitate at the decisive

moment, after which disappointed people will flood to the right (Italy 1920-21!).

We quarrel with the myth that October 1917 was an out-of-the-blue rush on power, in primitive conditions, irrelevant elsewhere. We champion efforts to extend democracy under capitalism. We quarrel with basing strategy on the idea that a parliamentary socialist government, backed by movements outside parliament, can erode and transform the state without the tiger lashing out.

You can imagine it might not, for example that if the working class triumphs in most of Europe and then a socialist party wins a parliamentary majority in one hold-out country, the bourgeoisie of that country will lack the will to resist. But you have to prepare for the not-all-sunshine variant.

In a long-established bourgeois democracy, insurrection might well arise from a left-wing majority being elected to government; the government then being subverted through such channels as the courts, the House of Lords, the monarchy, the top civil service, etc.; and the axis of the struggle then moving outside Parliament, as workers counter-organise. This possibility is discussed in Sean Matgamna's debate with Michael Foot, *Democracy, direct action and socialism*.

But to be confident that parliamentary channels plus support from below are the only, and the sufficient, way to deprive the bourgeoisie of state power bit by bit, without decisive backlash, is foolish. When Jeremy Corbyn was elected Labour leader, an army general, through the *Sunday Times*, threatened "effectively... a mutiny" ([bit.ly/c-mutiny](http://bit.ly/c-mutiny)).

Despite musings about Chile 1973, Ralph Miliband, in his book *Socialism for a Sceptical Age*, which Leo Panitch was summarising, proposes no tactics or preparation for the not-all-sunshine option.

**That is what its ruling-out of insurrection means. And that is why I think Miliband was wrong.**

*Martin Thomas, north London*

## Specificity of socialist politics

**A couple of corrections to your interview with me (Solidarity 419).**

The interview has me say, "Then, while I was still at high school, I worked with Freedom Road [a Maoist group]. Though I disagreed with them, I learned a lot about organising from them. Then I went to university in Chicago and drifted into the Democratic Socialists of America, where I've been ever since."

This makes it sound like I was overall hostile to FRSO. It would be better to say that I disagreed with them on certain points of theory and history. I agreed with them on much else.

Also: "There are questions about what and how much we might defend in Cuba and Venezuela against US imperialism, but views which see them as a model stand out-

side the box of what we publish. Some of our writers have positive things to say about Venezuela, but not as a model."

This again might make it sound like I'm more hostile to the Cuban and Venezuelan projects — and closer to the AWL's line — than I am. What I would say is that some of us are broadly supportive of and in solidarity with the political projects in places like Venezuela, others less so, but overall we don't see them as models that can simply be replicated in other places, any more than the Russian Revolution is.

**In other words, my emphasis is on the specificity of socialist politics in different contexts, rather than on whether we should somehow evaluate these projects as comprehensively good or bad.**

*Peter Frase, New York*

# No hard Brexit

**Loud voices among the Tories are pushing for a “hard Brexit”. They want to slam the door on migrants from Europe and make things difficult for migrant workers already here.**

The Tories are divided. Most of big business want to stay in the EU’s “single market”, so that they do not face tariffs or complicated juggling with forms and regulation when trading with the EU. They want to keep “passporting” rights for UK-based banks to trade across the EU.

They know they won’t get that without continuing freedom of movement for workers, but they don’t mind that, or they positively welcome a bigger pool of labour.

The Tories’ difficulties are our opportunity. Our priorities are different. Our first concern is the solidarity and unity of workers across borders, and so for security for migrants here and for freedom of movement both for their friends, families, compatriots, and for British-born people who want to work, study, or live elsewhere in Europe.

It is for opening the doors so that the refugees currently stacked in Calais, soon to be dispersed across France by water-cannon and bulldozers, can come here.

The Brexit vote has boosted the most narrow-minded so that even after the UK promised to take in child refugees fully qualified to come here, the government delayed month after month before admitting a first meagre few, only 14, on 17 October.

The disputes among the Tories and big business and economic links give us an opening to push back. It is even possible that the Tories will be so unable to cut a workable deal with the EU that Brexit is eventually rescinded.

The *Sunday Times* on 16 October published a previously-hidden article that leading Tory Brexiter Boris Johnson wrote just before the referendum started — an article opposing Brexit!

Johnson went for Brexit just to boost his career. He expected Brexit to lose, but the referendum campaign to establish him as a figure who could claim a top government job after



Protesters at the “March for Europe” just after the referendum

he “gallantly” (in fact, relievedly) “accepted” an anti-Brexit vote.

Norway, Switzerland, Canada, Albania, Singapore — the Brexiters never made clear, and mostly didn’t know, what their model for Britain-after-Brexit was.

They claimed it would be easy to cut a new deal with the EU. Yet the Canada-EU trade deal, much less fraught, and negotiated since 2008, is now stalled, maybe sunk, because

Belgium has rejected it, and it needs unanimous approval by EU states,

Their posters and campaign buses promised £350 million a week more for the NHS after Brexit, from money no longer going to EU contributions. The promise has vanished. The government has hinted that it may still pay into the EU budget after Brexit in order to get trade concessions.

They blamed migrants for the social prob-

lems caused by Tory cuts and curbs on council housing. The worst-hit areas, which voted heavily for Brexit, actually have fewest migrants.

The Brexit vote on 23 June set off a 41% increase in racial and religious hate crime in July 2016 (over July 2015). Official figures for August, published on 13 October, show a rate still much higher than previous years ([bit.ly/h-crime](http://bit.ly/h-crime)).

There was one valid idea behind the Brexit votes: that control over economic life has shifted further from ground level.

Capitalist economic life is always controlled by a small minority: bosses, bankers, top government officials. But the feeling that the centres of control are even further away, even more difficult at least to constrain, has a real basis.

World market forces, including the rapid forces of the global financial markets, dominate more. The chief economic criterion for governments has become making their territories attractive as perches for global capital.

Brexit is no answer. Smaller economic units — Britain, as compared to the EU — are even more subordinate to markets and global capital than larger. The EU has been willing to demand €13 billion back-taxes for Ireland from Apple, but the idea so scares Ireland that it has appealed against the ruling.

The only answer is solidarity and unity of workers across the largest expanses possible, both to check and constrain global capital, and then to replace it by social and economic cooperation and equalisation across borders.

**As the Tories’ conflicts develop, the labour movement can and should push back, to minimise, to block, to reverse the re-raising of barriers.**

## The pound and the Marmite crisis

**It’s often thought bad in Marxist publications to write articles on the theme “we don’t know”, but that is what I have to do about the falling pound.**

The exchange rate of the pound against other major currencies has fallen 17% since the Brexit vote on 23 June, and has recently had a further sudden lurch downwards. The inflation rate is ticking up a bit. Marmite is disappearing from the shelves at Tesco because its producer demanded a price rise to compensate for the falling exchange rate.

These trends could swell into dramas. The fall of the pound could spiral as speculators, seeing it sag, switch to other currencies and so make the pound fall further. The UK economy has a near-record 6% current-account deficit, and is highly dependent on speculative financial inflows.

Rising inflation will push up interest rates and so mortgage payments, and could set off a wave of dispossessions. It could, indeed it should, also spur sluggish trade unions into more militancy for wages.



Rising inflation also has benign effects for capitalism. Most capitalist governments, recently, have been piling manipulation upon financial manipulation to try to push up inflation to the optimum rate of about 2% (they reckon; or some would say 4%), at which it eases debt burdens and helps speed spending without disrupting. UK inflation is still well below that.

**Long-term, the Brexit turmoil is quite**



**likely to bring dramas from a falling exchange rate. Whether it does that now, or in the next year so, is another matter. Not yet. Beyond that, we don’t know.**

**Martin Thomas**

# 21 October 1966

**A villanelle about the Aberfan coal mining disaster, in which 144 people, including 116 school children, died when a coal mining waste tip collapsed.**

**There was a lot of anger at the National Coal Board for its neglect of safety, and at the inquest, one father insisted: "I want it recorded — 'Buried alive by the National Coal Board'. That is what I want to see on the record. That is the feeling of those present. Those are the words we want to go on the certificate."**

**By Janine Booth**

The miner insisted the coroner record  
The Panglas School building a homicide scene

They were buried alive by the National Coal Board

His heart was in bits though his shoulders were broad

Though mining was dirty, were consciences clean?

The miner insisted the coroner record

The muck, slush and water had tumbled and poured

The slurry ran black through the valley of green

They were buried alive by the National Coal Board

We all feel this way, the father implored  
The mums and the dads of the hundred-sixteen

The miner insisted the coroner record

The standard of care that it did not afford  
A tip in a place it should never have been  
They were buried alive by the National Coal Board

Aberfan wanted some justice restored  
Though justice had perished at 09:13  
The miner insisted the coroner record  
It was buried alive by the National Coal Board



# Prescription opioids: the op

## SCIENCE

**By Les Hearn**

**The 2016 World Congress on Pain, meeting in Yokohama in late September, held a packed Special Session on Opioids. The theme was their role in pain medicine. This might seem fairly settled since the analgesic properties of opium have been known for at least 3000 years. Not so!**

The scene was set by eminent US pain specialist Jane Ballantyne, president of Physicians for Responsible Opioid Prescribing and adviser to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). She described how over the last 25 years sales of prescription opioids have soared, as have emergency admissions and deaths. In the US, some one in five patients with chronic non-cancer pain (CNP) are prescribed opioids; since 1999, sales of prescription opioids have quadrupled; between 1999 and 2014, over 165,000 people died from overdose related to prescription opioids; more than 14,000 died this way in 2014, at least half of all opioid overdose deaths; nearly two million Americans abused or were dependent on prescription opioids in 2014, a quarter of those taking prescription opioids; over 1,000 people are treated in emergency departments for misus-

ing prescription opioids every day.

Eighty per cent of opioid prescriptions world wide are in the US, with just 5% of the population. This is not because Americans are suffering more pain: it is the product of drug companies "educating" physicians and patients, together with a production line model of health care. How has it come to this and will the problem spread? Drug companies would no doubt like to increase their opioid sales. This is a gigantic problem without an obvious solution. The new CDC Guidelines on Prescription Opioids may prevent the worsening of the situation but rolling back such a tide of addiction to legal drugs will not be easy.

## POPPY

**The opium poppy, *Papaver somniferum*, has been known at least since Neolithic times (perhaps even by Neanderthal people) and was widely cultivated and used in ancient Egypt, Sumer, Greece and so on.**

Morphine was isolated from opium in the 19th century and this allowed safer dosing, since the amount being dispensed could be accurately measured. Later, derivatives of morphine or compounds with similar actions, such as heroin, methadone, pethidine, oxycodone, hydrocodone and fentanyl, were developed. These, the opioids, are mainly

used for anaesthesia in operations (pethidine, fentanyl), for pain relief during childbirth (pethidine), and post-operative pain (often morphine). Morphine is supplied to US and British soldiers for use if injured on the field of battle. Opioids were also used as a cough suppressant (e.g. Codeine Linctus) and to treat diarrhoea (e.g. Collis Browne's or Kaolin & Morphine).

Since the opioids efficiently suppress the acute pain of injury or operation, a wholly desirable outcome, one might wonder why they are so tightly controlled or even banned around the world. One reason is that the therapeutic dose is fairly close to the toxic dose: they suppress the breathing reflex and an overdose stops the victim breathing. As Paracelsus said, "The dose makes the poison," and for heroin the Therapeutic Index (TI: the ratio of the toxic dose to the effective dose) is 25:1. This is a problem for recreational heroin users who don't know the purity of the drug they are taking.

Another reason is that, if the patient takes opioids over a long period, they develop a tolerance to the drugs: the amount needed to achieve the desired effect slowly increases and can reach levels that would be instantly fatal to a new patient.

The main reason for controlling or banning opioids is that they are very addictive. This is less of a problem for those taking them, as



# REASON IN

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2016 marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty. Reason In Revolt is a day of talks and discussions to celebrate our 50 years and work out what they can teach us. We invite all comrades, friends, and curious observers — old and new — to come and take part.

In 1966, a group of socialist activists founded Workers' Fight. Their aim was to renew and rebuild the socialist movement as a revolutionary and democratic movement — free of the deadening culture of Stalinism, and inspired by a critical, Marxist spirit.

Over the years, this tendency has broken much new ground in socialist ideas, and rediscovered lost histories of the Marxist-Trotskyist tradition, especially that of the "other" American Trotskyists — the group of comrades around Max Shachtman and Hal Draper. We have developed a uniquely serious, Marxist approach to imperialism, starting with debates around the struggle for democracy and unity in Ireland.

We have also been at the forefront of the biggest struggles waged by the working class over the last 50 years: the development of a working-class women's movement, the mass strike movements of the 1970s, and the rank-and-file revolt that shook the Labour Party and the British ruling class in the early 1980s — always trying to organise the grass-roots of those movements, building organisation in the workplace, and arguing and debating to clarify the view of the way ahead.

# Opiate of the people

they should, for short periods to deal with acute pain or to deal with pain associated with some terminal cancers. But, for those taking them for chronic pain or to experience the euphoric effect found with larger non-therapeutic doses, dependence or addiction can result, as well as side effects such as constipation, breathing problems in sleep, heart problems, suppressed immune systems, more bone fractures (perhaps because of dizziness and slower reactions), and disruption of hormone systems (including sex hormones). There is also paradoxically, increased sensitivity to pain in a significant proportion of chronic opioid users.

## LEGAL

**For most of the three or more millennia that opium has been known, it has been legal in most of the world, if rather frowned upon when used recreationally.**

Indeed, the British authorities allowed opium sale in India and imposed it by force in China in the Opium Wars. Sales of laudanum (tincture of opium and alcohol) in Britain were legal though regulated from 1868. Gradually, particularly in the first half of the 20th century, opium and its derivatives became illegal unless prescribed by a doctor. Following the International Opium Convention in 1912, drug control was incorporated into the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, and the League of Nations signatories agreed to prohibit trade in narcotics except for medical uses. Laws have become stricter and the “war on drugs” has escalated so that many countries now impose stiff penalties, up to execution, for possession and sale of opioids. Except in terms of job creation, this war has not succeeded.

Like other wars, this one has caused collat-

eral damage with the legitimate medical use of opiates, especially in palliative care of cancer patients, being restricted unnecessarily. The WCP Special Session on Opioids heard from an Indian pain specialist that in half of the world opioids were not available to alleviate unbearable suffering. In her own country, opioids were theoretically available but legal restrictions made doctors afraid to prescribe them for fear of falling foul of the criminal law.

It was in the USA, however, that the situation was the most bizarre. Alongside serious jail terms for mere possession of opioids, the drug companies had successfully argued from about 1980 that opioid prescriptions should be allowed for patients with chronic (long-term) non-cancer pain. It was argued that this would not result in dependence problems since only a small percentage of patients had hitherto become addicted to prescription opioids. This went against medical advice that they be used only for acute pain or for cancer pain, especially in those with a terminal diagnosis.

The epidemic started in 1995 when the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the opioid painkiller OxyContin (oxycodone). Its manufacturer, Purdue Pharma, sold \$45 million’s worth of OxyContin in 1996, \$1.1 billion in 2000, \$3.1 billion in 2010, some 30% of the painkiller market. It achieved this by aggressive advertising and targeting doctors already prescribing a lot of painkillers. The result has been a large number of people addicted to OxyContin and as many deaths as occur with illegal use of opioids. The opioid-paracetamol mixture Vicodin (containing hydrocodone) is involved in opioid dependence but also in deaths from paracetamol overdose.

This is at present almost entirely a US prob-



**OxyContin: making billions of dollars every year**

lem, with 80% of the world’s opioid consumption, legal and illegal, taking place in the USA. Most of the users are poor whites in areas like the Appalachians: hence its nickname “hillbilly heroin.” The historic pattern of under-treatment of pain in Afro-Americans due to racist assumptions has ironically largely spared them from the opioid epidemic.

## HEROIN

**A related problem is deaths from heroin overdose, which have nearly tripled in 12 years, exceeding 10,500 in 2014.**

The number of addicts has doubled in that time, with the vast majority of new users being people who had previously misused prescription opioids.

What to do? In a “shutting the stable door” move, the CDC have issued a new guideline for prescribing opioids for chronic pain, emphasising non-opioid treatments, low

dosages, and following up patients to check that opioids are having the desired effect or to help them taper off the drugs. This sounds a very labour-intensive policy and one wonders how this would work in the US health system.

Other private health systems will be prone to the problems of prescription opioids, but so too many public health systems: already it is reported that prescription opioid use has increased four-fold in 10 years in Australia while Canada, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands and Denmark are starting to catch up the USA. Other European countries and New Zealand also seem to be increasing prescription opioid use. With USA, these countries account for 96% of prescription opioid use world-wide with just 15% of the population.

**We should remember, however, that this is also a problem for the 85% who may need access to prescription opioids but can’t get them.**

# How opioids work

**Endogenous opioids (e.g. endorphin and enkephalin) have been found in all animals where they have been looked for, such as the very simple flatworms, as well as nematode worms, annelids, molluscs, crustaceans and insects, and all vertebrates.**

One major purpose may be to suppress pain etc. when priority is escape but endogenous opiates are involved in many other systems, such as the gut, and in social behaviours and in reward systems in the brain. They work by binding to opioid receptors,\* of which there are at least four types, found in different tissues and causing different effects.

Morphine (and to a lesser extent codeine) is produced by the opium poppy as part of its defence mechanism against damage. Entirely fortuitously, morphine binds strongly to opioid receptors and activates them, resulting in relief of pain, euphoria (in the reward systems), inhibition of gut movement (resulting in constipation), suppression of

the cough reflex, and depression of the breathing reflex (risking cessation of breathing). Codeine has no effect but is broken down by liver enzymes to produce morphine and other metabolites. People lacking these enzymes get no benefit from codeine.

Repeated use of morphine, or its derivatives such as heroin, reduces the body’s natural production of endogenous opioids, encouraging increased doses and resulting in withdrawal (abstinence) syndrome, an exaggeration of the opposite effects to those caused by morphine. This makes the original problem worse, which is why opioids should only be used for short periods.

Interestingly, there are some compounds, such as naloxone, which bind to opioid receptors even more strongly than morphine but do not activate them. These are opioid antagonists and can be used to reverse opioid poisoning since they rapidly displace opioids from the receptors and deactivate them.

Some opioids do not activate all receptor types. These partial agonists, such as Tra-

madol and buprenorphine, have been suggested as safer alternatives, with the latter being used to treat opioid dependence. When I was on a placement with Reckitt’s in the late 1970s, we were told that healthy volunteers taking buprenorphine for long periods had withdrawal symptoms when the drug was stopped but that they preferred these to the side effects from taking the drug.\*\*

**Nevertheless, buprenorphine is abused by some people, as is Tramadol.**

\*Hans Kosterlitz developed the first bioassay for the opioids (allegedly after a dream!). This consisted of a length of guinea-pig intestine whose electrically-stimulated contractions were inhibited by certain concentrations of morphine. Other potential opioids could be checked against this to assess their potency. Kosterlitz and his colleagues predicted the existence of a naturally-occurring opioid in mammals and this was confirmed when some mashed-up pig brain was added to the

saline solution bathing the intestine and its contractions were duly inhibited.

Kosterlitz was a refugee from Nazi Germany who settled in Aberdeen; his son Michael, now based in USA, has just jointly won the 2016 Nobel Prize in Physics: both are marvellous advertisements for the benefits of migration. Michael has said that he is considering renouncing British citizenship if Brexit goes ahead.

\*\*We were also told by a senior scientist that there were no serious health effects from long-term use of (prescription) opioids, apart from addiction. We now know that there are health effects and that long-term use of opioids does not solve the problem for which they are prescribed. It is still better to legally supply addicts than to criminalise them, but the task of weaning them from their drugs is going to be a difficult one.

# What's wrong with "Stop the War"?

By Simon Nelson

The Stop The War Coalition enjoyed its heyday around the time of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, but has regained some prominence since David Cameron's government first proposed the bombing of Syria in August 2013.

Feeding on perceptions that UK involvement in the Middle East has led to prolonged campaigns of bombing, loss of life, and the creation of unstable regimes, with very little of the humanity supposed to exist in "humanitarian intervention", the STWC has called a number of demonstrations and got some media coverage for its opposition to the UK and US involvement in coalition bombing of first Assad's forces and then Daesh.

But it has been very markedly a "stop-some-wars" effort.

Since 2011, at the start of the Syrian demonstrations against Assad, the leading lights of the STWC have failed to do more than mildly rebuke the Assad regime, which has been the main terrorist force in the country, causing the displacement of millions of people within Syria and into neighbouring Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey, and (in much smaller numbers) Europe.

In 2015, following the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader, STWC called for protests against those Labour MPs who backed the Tory government's call for bombing Daesh, but raised no calls to stop the Russian or Assad-regime bombing.

At the 8 October Stop the War coalition conference, Syrians heckled Jeremy Corbyn for his silence over the Russian bombardment of Aleppo. STWC honcho Chris Nineham ruled out "a protest outside the Russian embassy" on the grounds that it "would actually contribute to increasing the hysteria and the jingoism that is being whipped up at the minute to go against Russia" ([bit.ly/c-nine](http://bit.ly/c-nine)).

This approach, appealing to sentiment for peace in general, but in fact opposing only some wars, has been in STWC from the start.

It was formed at an ad-hoc meeting called at short notice in September 2001 from initial protests against US president George W



Bush's war plans following the September 11 Al Qaeda attacks in the USA. The meeting was controlled from the chair by Lindsey German, who was then a leader of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), but fell out of favour in the SWP after 2007 and quit, with Nineham and others, in 2010.

Darren Johnson of the Green Party and anti-war activist Milan Rai disputed vehemently with German at that meeting about the basis of the campaign, but other left groups were not allowed to speak (AWL) or were absent (the rest), and German steam-rolled Johnson and Rai.

The campaign quickly rallied many people angry at the plans to bomb Afghanistan. After a lull, STWC revived sharply in the build-up to the US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003. Local groups formed across the country.

The coalition now enjoyed the support of a range from the Quakers, the Green Party, and some Lib-Dems, to ultra-Stalinists, but was

controlled by the SWP with allies from the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) and reflected their world outlook.

Most of the world was horrified by the 9/11 attacks, but the SWP "refused to condemn" them, and allowed STWC to condemn the attacks only by way of a statement by Lindsey German, under pressure at the first regular STWC conference, that "of course" they must be condemned. They have since rewritten history to claim that the coalition always condemned those attacks.

## SWP

**The STWC reflected many of the SWP's political weaknesses. In the right place at the right time, it was able to mobilise huge numbers of people to demonstrations, as was the more-or-less explicitly Stalinist Workers World Party where it controlled the movement in the USA against the Iraq invasion.**

The SWP and its allies sadly tainted those mobilisations by promoting a mix of a-political peace-talk with under-the-counter apologies or semi-apologies for the Taliban, Saddam Hussein, and then the Iraqi "resistance" (forerunners of Daesh). STWC leaders, Lindsey German and John Rees from the SWP (and now in Counterfire), and Andrew Murray of the CPB, sought to exclude class-struggle and internationalist politics in favour of a simplistic picture of a world of two camps: the US, the UK, and Europe bad, anyone who clashed with them, good.

STWC leaders implicitly backed the Taliban in Afghanistan, and gave a positive "anti-imperialist" spin to various shades of Islamist reaction.

The official history of the coalition, *Stop the War: The Story of Britain's Biggest Mass Movement*, rebukes socialists who said that a critique of political Islam was necessary for a healthy movement. "At its first conference in October 2001, the Coalition had to rebuff efforts by ultra-left fragments to place a barrier between the anti-war movement and the Muslim community. This took the form of demands that the Coalition reject 'Muslim fundamentalism' equally with US imperialism... Its effect would have been to alienate broad sections of Muslim opinion."

Symbolically, the Worker-communist Party of Iraq had its stalls at STWC demonstrations

harassed and excluded by STWC organisers. Other revolutionary socialist groups of Middle-East origin were so disgusted that they refused to work with STWC. The main targets of the "Muslim fundamentalism" which the STWC was so keen to whitewash was and is Muslims or secularised ex-Muslims who reject their fundamentalist impositions.

A number of STWC local meetings, most notoriously in Birmingham, segregated men and women to comply with the wishes of local Islamic leaders. In 2002 the coalition also starting organising in collaboration with the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), the UK franchise of the Egyptian-based Muslim Brotherhood. MAB was then a small group, mainly of activists of Arab origin, which had difficulty making links in the larger mostly-Muslim communities in Britain. STWC accredited it as co-organiser of the big anti-war marches, and, so to speak, as the "Muslim face" of the anti-war movement.

An article in *Race and Class* journal in 2008, *Standing together: the Muslim Association of Britain and the anti-war movement*, notes that: "Having emerged as the chosen vehicle for Muslim participation in antiwar politics, MAB was elevated from a relatively obscure group to one with a national profile. It gained considerable influence... MAB assumed an unprecedented significance... Its membership rose from 400 to 800 or 1,000 – still small, of course, but twice its original size." The SWP, by making this alliance, helped to recruit for an organisation that their chief theoretician Tony Cliff had called "clerical fascist" in 1946!

STWC also promoted George Galloway MP as one of its main public speakers. Galloway was a Stalinistic soft-left Labour MP with a history of commercial relations with reactionary regimes (Pakistan, Iraq, Gulf States) or their trusted agents.

Simultaneously, STWC refused to have anything to do with the emerging Iraqi trade unions. In fact they condemned them.

After the Iraq movement subsided, and particularly after US troops in Iraq withdrew to bases in 2010 and then quit in 2011, the STWC was only sporadically active.

The Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and the Russian bombing of Syria from September 2015 exposed again the "campist" politics of the STWC leaders. In 2010, the leading SWPers in the coalition, Lindsey German, John Rees, and Chris Nineham, had left the SWP and formed a new group, Counterfire.

Counterfire moved away from describing itself as "Trotskyist" at all, and became increasingly pro-Russian in its propaganda. It approvingly published articles by Eamonn McCann and Jon Wight which said that if a side had to be picked in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, then it should be Russia, and that the US was the "main enemy" over the annexation of Crimea respectively.

An increasing number of leftists have come to dispute these politics and the way they taint the STWC's campaigning. The STWC's exclusion of anti-Assad Syrians from platforms, at the same time as it promotes Assad-regime supporters, and the mealy-mouthed excuse from Chris Nineham for why the STWC has no protest against Russian bombing, no longer washes with many activists.

**An genuine anti-war movement needs to have an internationalist viewpoint. Solidarity against the forces of barbarism whether western or not should be our guiding principle. And the Stop the War Coalition has singularly failed to follow it.**

## When STW denounced Iraqi trade unionists

### AS WE WERE SAYING

**On Sunday 10 October [2004] the officers of the Stop The War Coalition circulated on email a statement written on 8 October.**

After piously claiming that "STWC has always refrained from taking any position on the internal development of Iraq", it vehemently took sides in those "internal developments" by denouncing the Iraqi Federation of Trade Union [IFTU].

It did not question that the IFTU is a genuine workers' organisation — "the IFTU is one of a number of trade unions and workers' organisations in Iraq", it noted — nor mention that other trade union organisations in Iraq, while rejecting the IFTU's support for the Allawi government, share the IFTU's hostility to the Islamist militias.

The IFTU's "lesser evil" position reflects the general philosophy of the Communist Party of Iraq [but]... the IFTU is still a trade union organisation. But the STWC went on to condemn not only the IFTU but any at-

tempt at trade union organisation in Iraq. "With regard to the IFTU, the STWC condemns... its view that genuinely independent trade unionism in Iraq can develop under a regime of military occupation".

So what is it possible to develop? Genuinely independent sectarian militias!

The STWC statement concluded by endorsing the "struggle of Iraqis, by whatever means they find necessary" against the occupation. Issued the day after hostage Ken Bigley was beheaded, this amounted to an endorsement of such methods.

By the time the STWC statement appeared in the *Morning Star* on 11 October, that phrase, "by whatever means they find necessary", had been cut out.

**But Galloway, Bamberg, and Lindsey German between them had developed an agitation to justify not only the disruption at the European Social Forum [where an IFTU speaker was shouted down], but far worse, against the alleged "Quislings" of the IFTU, or against any trade unionist in Iraq.**

• From *Solidarity*, 21 October 2004

# Not miserable but inspiring

Tim Cooper reviews 'I, Daniel Blake'

**After the UK premiere of Ken Loach's latest film, 'I, Daniel Blake', in Liverpool at the time of Labour Party conference, I was filmed for a trailer.**

What did I think of it? I had wondered whether I was a wuss, for blubbing, but when I looked everyone was crying or laughing or both.

Daniel is a carpenter in his late 50s who has had a near-fatal heart attack and been told not to work by his doctor. His inability to fill in forms on the computer in a library, and his honest but naive answers, get him moved from disability benefit (ESA) to JSA. When he admits he can't take the jobs he's applied for, he is sanctioned, and spirals into the poverty of food banks and charity.

I'd worked in job centres and signed on, and so was ready to pick on every mistake. But I couldn't work out how the film had been so accurate.

I was saying so in the toilets after the film, then heard a voice: "I'd like to shake your hand, as that's what I wanted to hear". It was

Paul Laverty, the screenwriter.

He said a lot of the actors were former jobcentre workers. I said I'd wash my hands first, and he said not to bother as he "likes to get his hands dirty". (He has been a human rights lawyer in some of the worst war zones).

It's the ability to pick up on mundane conversations or little phrases that connects the movie so intimately to working-class experience so intimately. Some right wing reviewers think it too ranty, too anti-government, but that is because, in the words of Jarvis Cocker, they'll "never live like common people".

I feel this film could do for the 21st century what Orwell did in the 20th or Dickens (who, so Marx said, "issued to the world more po-



litical and social truths than have been uttered by all the politicians, publicists and moralists put together") for the 19th century.

We see Daniel literally running the computer mouse up the screen (we all know someone older who can't cope with computers or smartphones), but he is tenderly practical helping Katie, a single mother forced to

move to Newcastle from high-rent London to save the state money. They form a touching sort of family unit, particularly with Katie's boy Dylan, who has developed obsessional rituals from the trauma of being shunted through hostels and across the country.

The jobcentre workers are like prisoners forced to recite scripts. They say they can't help because remote "decision makers" must decide. They mostly succumb to the pressures. One brave worker who tries to help is punished by bullying bosses.

It isn't a miserable film but rather inspiring, particularly at the point where Daniel makes a powerful "I, Daniel Blake" statement of defiance.

A few years ago, some good civil service union activists whom I argued with said that they didn't think there could be a major campaign uniting jobcentre workers and claimants over sanctions as the "blame scroungers" culture was so strong.

**But then 18 months ago nobody predicted the popularity of anti-austerity politics, as reflected by the hundreds of thousands joining the Labour Party now.**

# Clement Attlee — the compromising committee man

John Cunningham reviews *Citizen Clem: a biography of Attlee* by John Bew, published by riverrun, 2016.

**Aware that the life of the post-1945 Labour leader and prime minister has been done before, Bew's biography attempts to give new angles on Attlee's life.**

He isn't successful and the search for new perspectives ends up recounting endless Cabinet intrigues, Attlee's relationship with Churchill, and countless opinions on Attlee from everybody and their uncle.

There is so much trivia in these pages that an alternative title might be *Everything you never needed to know about Clement Attlee but couldn't be arsed to ask*. For example he spends some time, looking at what Attlee read and how that might have influenced him. This is all very well and good, but it seems a risky

proposition that you can gain a piercing, revelatory insight into someone's life and political/philosophical views by surveying what is on their bookshelves.

The two books, Bew mentions most frequently, apparently much-loved by Attlee, are the utopian socialist fiction of William Morris's *News From Nowhere* and the American Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backwards*. Clement Attlee may be many things to many people — and Bew is clearly asking the reader to look anew at a man widely thought of as a plodding bore — but a utopian socialist is not one of them.

In fact Bew is so focussed on the minutiae of Attlee's life that the context of the battles of the 1930s and Labour's victory in 1945 and what it subsequently did (or didn't do as the case may be) is often lost or glossed over. The General Strike of 1926 and the Spanish Civil

War and Labour's attitude to them aren't given the depth of treatment they deserves. The left Labour MP Aneurin Bevan is depicted as a squawking whiner. Marxism, we are bluntly told, doesn't exist in Britain!

While we are told that Attlee visited the USSR in 1937 and he thought that "...its sum total justifies the revolution itself", there is no elaboration. The reader is not informed whether Attlee knew of the Moscow Show Trials, which had started the year before. It would seem incredible that he didn't know, but if he did he would hardly be the first British social democrat to look the other way. The book just leaves a blank space.

But Attlee is depicted, rightly I think, as a complex man who despite his self effacing modesty and his complete lack of charisma, did have ability. His ability, however, lay in his talent for manoeuvre co-joined to the mindset of a committee man. Ultimately, Attlee was a quiet, behind-the-scenes "fixer".

When faced with a dilemma or a problem he almost always compromised. Compromise, in and of itself is nothing bad, but it is a question of what kind of compromise you are talking about. Attlee's compromises were often based on the line of least resistance rather than any consideration of principle.

This is perhaps no more starkly illustrated than in Attlee's faith in the utterly ineffective League of Nations, which lead to one disappointment after another. Although he was clearly sympathetic to the plight of the Spanish Republic. Official Labour Party policy on Spain was non-intervention, exactly mirroring that of the British and French governments' national policy.

During and after World War Two Labour and Conservative international policies were virtually identical, something which has changed little over the years. Independence for India (achieved in 1947) was the major point of difference between the two parties although for a long

time Attlee favoured only Dominion status for India. He later embraced the idea of full independence, but not before he had Indian nationalist leaders imprisoned in 1942. Compromise and contradiction, not for the first time, often go together.

Time and again, it is impossible not to reflect on the lost opportunities of the post-1945 Labour governments, particularly given the crushing majority enjoyed by Labour. The disappointments and limitations of the nationalisation programme, particularly the failure to nationalise the steel industry (of which Bew says little). The utter failure to reassess Britain's place in the world. The willing acceptance of puppet status with the Americans. The idiocy of the decision to develop a nuclear bomb. The reluctance, particularly strong on Attlee's part, to abolish or even reform the private fee-paying schools (of which he was a beneficiary). The failure to develop a coherent and workable policy on land and land ownership.

There were some successes, the establishment of the welfare state and especially the NHS, real achievements which should never be underestimated, but, again, there were so many lost opportunities.

There is a sloppiness about facts in this book. According to the blurb, John Bew is one of Britain's leading historians. He is the son of Paul Bew, a revolutionary socialist in the 1960s who is now a Lord. Both Bews are associates of the neo-conservative Henry Jackson Society.

John Bew appears not to know that what led up to the General Strike of 1926 was the mineowners' attempt to add an hour on to the working day and reduce the wages of the miners. Instead he says that the mineowners wanted to add an extra day onto the working week. No doubt they would have loved this, but it simply didn't happen.

**There are better books to read on Attlee and the Labour Party. Although many readers of *Solidarity* will no doubt disagree with Ralph Miliband's conclusions, his *Parliamentary Socialism* has stood the test of time and is a much superior analysis on Labour than the one on offer from John Bew.**

## Books by Workers' Liberty



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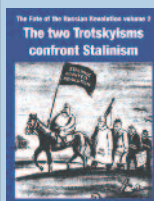
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# Where we stand

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

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The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control, and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

**In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:**

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
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- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.

If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!



## Events

### Thursday 20 October

**Shahrokh Zamani action campaign launch**  
7pm, Hamilton House (NUT), Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD  
[bit.ly/2dG07fo](http://bit.ly/2dG07fo)

### Saturday 22 October

**Stop Russian War Crimes in Aleppo**  
2pm, Russian Embassy, London, W8 4QX  
[bit.ly/2eMVXHI](http://bit.ly/2eMVXHI)

### Monday 24 October

**Bristol Momentum Students Hungry for Justice meeting**  
Venue TBC  
[bit.ly/2dkCHAG](http://bit.ly/2dkCHAG)

**Got an event you want listing?**  
[solidarity@workersliberty.org](mailto:solidarity@workersliberty.org)

### Tuesday 25 October

**Haringey Momentum AGM**  
Venue TBC  
[bit.ly/2cQ651d](http://bit.ly/2cQ651d)

### Thursday 2 November

**Sheffield Momentum AGM**  
7pm, Central United Reform Church, Sheffield, S1 2JB  
[bit.ly/2dLn6WH](http://bit.ly/2dLn6WH)

### Saturday 5 November

**National Libraries, Galleries and Museums demonstration**  
12 noon, British Library, London  
[bit.ly/2cjMI0O](http://bit.ly/2cjMI0O)

### Saturday 5 November

**Cleaners' protest at John Lewis**  
2pm, John Lewis, Oxford Street, London, W1A 1EX  
[bit.ly/2dIqpzw](http://bit.ly/2dIqpzw)

More online at [www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org)



Workers' Liberty



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## London Momentum discusses expulsions

### LABOUR

By Sacha Ismail

**The London regional Momentum meeting (15 October) revealed a growing organisation with substantial life, but one that needs much more organisation. Hopefully this meeting represents the start of that process.**

In February, following a grass-roots revolt against attempts to create undemocratic structures appointed from above, the organisation established regional networks to co-ordinate groups and elect the bulk of the National Committee. The London region met twice but then did not meet for six months, despite attempts to get it to do so.

Did this reflect lack of confidence from a new organisation, exacerbated by pressure from the Momentum office, which shut down the NC and discouraged regional meetings during the Labour leadership campaign? In any case, when convened, the regional meeting was attended by about 45 people, 35 of whom were delegates representing between 15 and 20 London groups (with some groups not present) and a smattering of other Momentum organisations (including youth, disabled, LGBT, women).

There was wide political diversity in the room.

Each group present reported on their activity, which was actually very helpful and encouraging — there is a lot of good work being done, from supporting cleaners'

struggles in the City of London to winning the nomination for a marginal council by-election in Tory Wandsworth. New groups are still appearing.

There was controversy about whether to take motions. Underlying this was a wider disagreement about whether the region should take motions at all. Having every meeting entirely taken up by motions would be undesirable, but without the ability to put proposals there is surely no possibility of democratic decision-making.

In the end, the meeting voted on two things: a proposal about campaigning against expulsions and suspensions from the Labour Party, from Lewisham; and a statement about Jackie Walker's removal as Vice Chair of Momentum, which supporters of Global Women's Strike had put forward. This did not come from a group but de facto represented a number of groups who have voted for Walker's reinstatement.

The motion about expulsions and suspensions was passed almost unanimously, to go forward to the 5 November NC, with a clear consensus that Momentum's inaction on this issue is a real problem. Unfortunately a line supporting the Stop the Purge conference in Nottingham was deleted by a margin of two votes after some bizarre attacks on the AWL. (We are "Zionists", supposedly; we are involved in Stop the Purge; therefore Stop the Purge is Zionist and cannot be supported... I think most delegates felt they didn't know enough about the campaign and this crazy, sectar-

ian stuff made some feel uncomfortable).

An attempt to delete a call for Corbyn and McDonnell to be bold on these issues, motivated by Global Women's Strike supporters on the explicit grounds that Momentum should not even criticise the Labour leadership by implication but simply support what they say, was overwhelmingly defeated.

On the removal of Jackie Walker as Vice Chair there was a long debate. London NC reps Jill Mountford and Michael Chessum, who both also sit on the national Steering Committee and voted to remove Walker, explained their decision. Fellow rep and London regional chair Delia Mattis explained why she disagreed and criticised how the decision-making process had been handled by Jon Lansman.

Eventually, by a margin of three, the meeting deleted the call to reinstate Walker as chair and substituted a call to campaign for her reinstatement in the Labour Party.

The meeting will reconvene on 29 October to discuss Momentum structures, as well as other issues, and to hold a new election for representatives on the National Committee.

**A collection for striking Picturehouse workers was taken.**

**Stop the Labour Purge Conference**  
**26 November, Nottingham**  
[bit.ly/purge-conf](http://bit.ly/purge-conf)

## Socialist Party fail to draw lessons on Labour

By Michael Johnson

**Clive Heemskerk, national election agent for the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), has signalled a turn towards the Corbyn surge in an article in *The Socialist* (28 September).**

He argues that "consolidating Jeremy's victory against [the] continued opposition [of the Labour right] — by really transforming Labour into an anti-austerity, socialist, working-class mass movement — is the critical task facing socialists in Britain today."

Since it emerged from Militant in 1991, the Socialist Party's founding principle, raised to the point of dogma, has been that Labour had been irreversibly transformed from a workers' party into a neoliberal capitalist party. The task of socialists, therefore, was to build a "new mass workers' party", a form of surrogate social-democracy, outside of Labour and its affiliate trade unions.

Flowing logically from this was standing candidates as part of TUSC (on a low political basis) and discouraging involvement in, and trade union affiliation to, the Labour Party.

Even in July 2015, as the first Cor-

byn leadership election gathered steam, the SP cautioned that though Corbyn might win and his supporters would fight against the right-wing, "it is more likely that such a struggle would result in the left being ejected from the party."

No need to worry though: "This too, however, could create the base for a significant new workers' party" and the SP "along with others in TUSC, has been campaigning to prepare the ground for the creation of such a party."

Now that much of the heavy lifting has been done, the SP watching from the sidelines has judged the prospects for working-class political representation through the Labour Party to be rather rosier.

The SP fall short of stating that its members will rejoin the Labour Party, however.

Rather, it writes that TUSC "could agree a broad policy to take into the labour movement: that the unions must have their collective representation and proportionate weight restored in the formation of Labour Party policy, the selection and re-selection of Labour Party candidates, and the administration of the party locally and nationally."

The SP wants "a modern version of the early federal structure of the

Labour Party which encompassed trade unions, the co-operative movement, women's suffrage campaigners, and a number of independent socialist parties."

Under this system, TUSC could have a similar relationship to Labour as the Co-Operative Party, which is registered with the Electoral Commission but affiliated to Labour on the basis that it stands no independent candidates of its own.

This is a policy not so much for the immediate term but conditional on the Pollyannaish notion that Labour would realistically allow the SP to affiliate.

The SP is still yet to draw a balance sheet of their epochal perspective on Labour. How on earth could a straightforwardly capitalist party now find itself in the situation that it could now be transformed into "an anti-austerity, socialist, working-class mass movement"?

**The answer, of course, is that the Blairite project of transforming Labour went far but was never consolidated, and Labour remained a "bourgeois workers' party" with trade union links — not a straightforwardly capitalist party like the US Democratic Party or the Lib Dems.**

# Cinema strikes spread



**Workers at the Ritzy Picturehouse cinema in Brixton struck again on Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 October. They were joined on Saturday 15 by workers at Hackney Picturehouse on strike for the first time. A front-of-house assistant at Hackney PictureHouse spoke to *Solidarity*.**

**Before I joined BECTU, I was a rep on the Hackney Picturehouse “Staff Forum”.**

That’s the staff organisation which is set up, supported and financed by Picturehouse itself. Over two years I found it to be ineffective, undemocratic, and unrepresentative, especially when we tried to bring forward questions about the Living Wage.

The Ritzy staff struck 13 times in 2014. That was a huge inspiration to me, and to others at Hackney: it inspired us, first of all, to go and speak to Ritzy workers about what we could do to get the Living Wage for ourselves. It fixed in my mind

the idea that all employers should pay the Living Wage, especially Cineworld [the owners of Picturehouse], who have made £83.3million profit so far this year alone.

A colleague of mine knows a Ritzy Picturehouse BECTU member personally. So she came up to a meeting that we held amongst ourselves as Hackney staff. She gave us advice about how to get started. After that, me and another worker went to the head office of BECTU to meet other Ritzy workers, and BECTU officials. They were helpful in clarifying the precise steps we had to go through in the process of getting here. I don’t know about everyone else here, but this is the first job I’ve been in where I’ve been in a union.

It wasn’t hard to convince other workers here that Picturehouse should pay the Living Wage. And the experience of the staff forum made it clear to us that the next step would be to join BECTU.

The 26% pay rise that the Ritzy staff won was a big inspiration, showing us what was possible.

We’ve got very high union den-

sity in Hackney Picturehouse now. This has really changed the atmosphere at work for the better now. There’s more cohesion, an atmosphere of solidarity — it’s made us all feel a lot closer.

Have people’s politics changed as a result of the strike? I don’t know about everyone else. Personally, my views have changed. The farther I’ve gone down the road towards this strike, the more radical my ideas have become. Once we decided to get mobilised and active it forced me to do a lot of reading and make sure that I believed that we were doing the right thing. And the process has only made me more sure that workers in this country are being constantly exploited, because employers have too much power and there are too few jobs to go round.

To other workers in our situation, I’d like to say this: you deserve a wage that’s enough for you to live on, and you have the power to change things.

**Get in touch with a union and pressure your employer to pay you a fair wage.**

## Veolia caught strike breaking



**By Gemma Short**

**Multinational refuse outsourcing company Veolia has been bring workers from other parts of the country in an attempt to break a strike of bin workers in Sheffield.**

Workers struck on Wednesday 5 October over a derisory pay offer. Their union GMB has found out that Veolia used workers from the London borough of Haringey

working overtime shifts to cover the strike in Sheffield. It paid for first class train tickets for the Haringey workers to travel up and put them up in a hotel.

Sheffield and Haringey Labour and Momentum activists are coordinating to protest Veolia’s dirty tactics.

**Sheffield workers struck again on Monday 17 October. As yet it is unclear if Veolia used the strike breaking tactics again.**

## Newsquest strike

**By Peggy Carter**

**Journalists at Newsquest, south London, will strike for five days in a long running dispute over a restructure that puts all newsroom staff at risk of redundancy.**

The restructure would leave just 12 reporters covering 11 of Newsquest’s newspapers and eight websites.

An initial 14-day strike was to start on Thursday 6 October but was delayed to allow for talks. When talks produced no movement from Newsquest, workers started a five-day strike on Thursday 13 October. The new strike days will start on Monday 24 October.

Newsquest is the second-largest local and regional newspaper publisher in the UK. The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) argues Newsquest is driving down standards, terms and conditions for journalists and making their life a misery while continuing to maximise profits for bosses and shareholders. Newsquest made £60m pre-tax profits in 2014 (their 2015 accounts are apparently overdue!).

**Seven journalists have already quit since the restructure was announced and many are now whistleblowing on the horrendous working conditions.**

• Send messages of support to: [bernardr@nuj.org.uk](mailto:bernardr@nuj.org.uk)

# Southern guards’ fight goes on

**By Ollie Moore**

**Southern rail workers began a further three-day strike from 18 October in their battle to defend the role of the guard.**

Southern bosses recently re-offered a £2,000 payment to all workers in exchange for accepting new, non-safety-critical roles as “On-Board Supervisors”. The workers’ union, RMT, denounced the offer as a bribe.

A union statement said: “The company have been told repeatedly that money is not the issue and that the safety of passengers and staff is not for sale. RMT disputes the bogus figures on the number of staff working. Our reps at all locations report that morale is high and that support for the strike action remains rock solid.”

RMT has called a demonstration at Parliament at 12.30 on 1 November to support the Southern dispute.

**Read more about the Southern Rail dispute: [bit.ly/2eh1Bhf](http://bit.ly/2eh1Bhf) and [bit.ly/2eqgqyr](http://bit.ly/2eqgqyr)**

**Read about the wider fight against Driver Only Operation: [bit.ly/2dY3Qau](http://bit.ly/2dY3Qau)**

**Support Southern Conductors**

**Protest Demo & Rally**

**1st Nov 2016**

**Protest**  
12.30 – 13.30 outside Parliament  
Assemble opposite Old Palace Yard

**Rally**  
Committee Room 10  
Inside Parliament 14.00 – 15.30

Speakers include:  
Mick Cash, General Secretary RMT  
Manuel Cortes, General Secretary TSSA  
Andy McDonald MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Transport  
Spokesperson, Disabled People Against Cuts  
Caroline Lucas MP, Brighton Pavilion

**By Charlotte Zalens**

**Bus drivers, engineers, and controllers working for London bus operator Tower Transit will strike again on Wednesday 19 October.**

Workers struck several times in September in a dispute over imposed roster changes which affect workers’ work-life balance and leave them out of pocket.

## Museum cleaners win living wage

**By Ollie Moore**

**Cleaners at the London Transport Museum have won the London living wage, after a long campaign.**

The cleaners, who are members of the TSSA union, organised demonstrations and petitioning

outside their workplace.

Tube cleaners in the RMT union also demonstrated recently, campaigning outside City Hall and the headquarters of cleaning contractor Interserve.

**They demanded a £10/hour minimum wage, staff travel passes, and direct employment.**

## London bus strike restarts

One of the planned 24 hour strikes in September was cancelled as a “goodwill gesture” to the company to encourage negotiations. Tower Transit has refused to revisit the imposed roster changes in negotiations.

**Bosses rarely offer goodwill. Bus companies reacted the same way in the London-wide pay strike last year.**



# Solidarity

For a workers' government

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## Aid needed for civilians in Mosul battle

By Simon Nelson

**The United Nations has appealed for an additional £50m to cope with an expected flood of refugees as the Iraqi government starts its operation to re-take the city of Mosul from Daesh.**

UN humanitarian chief Stephen O' Brien has said: "I am extremely concerned for the safety of up to 1.5 million people living in Mosul who may be impacted." The UN reckons over 700,000 people could flee the city, but tents are available for only tens of thousands.

Average daily temperature lows around Mosul will drop to 4° in December and 2° in January.

We can hope that the people of Mosul will be able to make use of the Iraqi government offensive, which began on 17 October, to rise up against Daesh and to defend themselves both from Daesh and from reprisals or sectarianism by the Iraqi army or its allies.

But we can make no estimate of how likely or feasible such a rising it. Rising or no rising, all aspects of this assault should be monitored, scrutinised and observed as civilian life is likely to be seen as collateral damage by all sides in this bloody conflict.

The Iraqi government operation is set to last several months. Daesh has controlled the city since June 2014.

Mosul is Iraq's second largest city. Before 2014 it had a population estimated at up to two million. 60% were Sunni Arabs, about

27% Kurds, with Assyrians, Turkmens, and smaller minorities of Christians and Yazidis. Most of the non-Sunni or non-Arab people have fled since 2014.

The Iraqi government counter-attack is heavily supported and aided by the USA, which brokered a deal on oil and gas revenues between Baghdad and the Kurdish Regional Government of northern Iraq in order to get them to cooperate in the counter-attack. The Iranian government is also surely involved behind the scenes.

The announced deal is that Kurdish units, under the control of the Kurdistan Regional Government, and Iraqi Shia militias, are part of the operation in the surrounding areas, but will avoid entering Mosul itself so as to reduce resentment and fear in the now almost entirely Sunni Arab population of the city.

The actions of Shia militia in other cities re-taken from Daesh have caused great fear among Sunni Arabs in Iraq. Reprisal attacks, mass shootings, and destruction of mosques has often accompanied "liberation" by fighters who seek sectarian vengeance against those whom they view as collaborating with Daesh.

When swathes of Sunni-Arab-majority territory were taken over by Daesh in June 2014, many locals who had suffered from repression, sectarianism, neglect, and corruption under the Maliki and Abadi governments saw little difference, or maybe even some improvement, as long as they followed



Refugees fleeing Mosul after Daesh took over

Daesh rules. Many will be disillusioned now, after living under Daesh terror, but fears of reprisal could drive them back into the arms of a Daesh underground continuing guerrilla war after the Baghdad government reconquers Mosul.

4,000 Kurdish Peshmerga and 30,000 government troops are pitched against anywhere up to 8,000 Daesh fighters. The operation will not be over quickly.

Amaq, one of the Daesh news sites, reports a series of suicide attacks against Iraqi government forces as US and UK airstrikes continue to bombard Daesh territory.

Turkey has troops as well as tanks on the ground, as part of its growing collaboration with the Kurdish Regional Government in northern Iraq. The Turkish government also cites the historic presence of Turkmens in Mosul as entitlement to a stake in this fight. Its alliance with the KRG, which extends back to a gas deal made in 2011, will give it a say in how the operation is conducted and in the subsequent exploitation of the oil fields around Mosul.

Daesh have lost 50% of their territory since they declared their "caliphate". The loss of towns like Manbij has hit them financially,

and they lack human resources and supply routes. Some experts believe that Daesh will be defeated at least militarily by late 2017; others think it will take longer.

However, even after a Daesh defeat in the open field, thousands of Daesh fighters may disperse for terrorist activities, or go underground and then build on anger against the Iraqi government again failing to fulfil its promises to the Sunni minority.

**Recent history shows the Baghdad Government to be viciously sectarian and both unable and unwilling to satisfy the demands of the Sunni Arabs.**

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